

St. John of Damascus Orthodox Mission  
12989 CR 1113  
Tyler, TX 75709  
29 January 2023

## **2023 Annual Parish Meeting**

~ Fr. David opened our meeting, and called the meeting to order. I (Zachary Carnes) certified that a Quorum was present.

~ Summer Richards made a motion to accept the annual meeting minutes for 2022, and Michelle Stuckey seconded that motion. The motion passed by a voice vote.

~ Fr. David then briefly presented the priest's report. He noted that we kept all the feasts of the year. We married, we buried, and baptized members of our parish. He expressed his hope that this year Christ has become more present in our lives through our efforts. St. John's has continued to grow numerically and financially. We have begun to put in place our plans to establish missions in East Texas. The day before our annual meeting liturgies were held in Longview and Nacogdoches. He has hopes that these missions will continue to flourish. We had twenty-five baptisms and chrismations in 2022. Fr. David also gave an update on our iconography. He explained that the iconography for the transepts of the church is on track. Perhaps after this phase is completed we can begin to install the iconography in the dome.

~ Fr. David invited Fr. Athanasios to give an update on the St. Paisios Mission in Nacogdoches. Fr. Athanasios explained the timeline of the reactivation of the mission including the blessing to reactivate the mission, the gradual expansion of the number of services, the hierarchical liturgy with Bishop Gerasim the previous day, and the eventual full-time operation of the mission with weekly services after Fr. Athanasios' internship at St. John's comes to an end in the summer.

~ Additionally, Fr. David explained that the St. Ephraim Mission in Longview celebrated a liturgy the previous day on their patronal feast day. Fr. David is going to meet with Fr. Herman to set a budget and to determine the steps that Fr. Herman needs to take to continue the work of further establishing the Longview mission. Hopefully, Longview will develop in 2023 like the Nacogdoches mission has over the last few months.

~ In light of the establishment of the missions, Fr. David explained that while it is bittersweet because many of our friends won't be regularly going to church with us, it is necessary as the Church expands in East Texas.

~ Parish council warden Gerald Hook gave his warden's report. He spoke briefly about the HVAC system. He explained that he purchased two sets of reusable filters per return vent. This should save the parish a great deal of money over the lifetime of these reusable filters. In May, Johnny Hoats cleaned the condenser coils for the HVAC systems and replaced one of the contactors on one of the condensers. We also had an issue with one of the tankless water heaters, and Johnny Hoats replaced the breaker for the tankless water heater. Bill Billington has headed up the lawn maintenance crew and has organized volunteers for that. Gerald thanked everybody who has helped with lawn maintenance. Unfortunately, on October 4<sup>th</sup> our storage shed was

broken into and several pieces of equipment were stolen. Ricky Stoner loaded up the riding lawnmower and took it home for safekeeping. Gerald reported the theft to the Smith County Sheriff's office, but there isn't much that they can do. We have begun to replace the stolen equipment. Gerald also explained that we are planning to have a parish workday sometime in the spring. We are also looking to create a path down to the cemetery to make it more accessible, and on the topic of accessibility Gerald told the parish about the folding wheelchair ramp in the narthex that will enable all guests to access the church.

~ Gerald was thanked for his service as he is leaving his post to be involved at the St. Paisios Mission in Nacogdoches.

~ Fr. David specifically noted the involvement of Teresa Nail and her children in maintaining the grounds of the church and the flower beds. He also noted that Bill Billington will be building the crosses for the cemetery. He also seconded Gerald's statement and said that we will be having a church workday soon.

~ Fr. David gave an update as to the changes in personnel on the parish council. Gerald Hook, our parish warden, is leaving, and I (Zachary Carnes) have finished my three years on the parish council. Bill Billington will be stepping into the role of parish warden, and Stephanie Fuller will be stepping into the role of parish council secretary. Paul Cowan and Leif Pierson will be joining the parish council as the new members. Deacon Theophan Alvarez made a motion to accept the parish council for the coming year, and Ricky Stoner seconded that motion. The motion passed.

~ Fr. David took a moment to recognize all the work that Xenia Durham has done over the years as the parish treasurer. He explained to the parish that while Anya Hoats is taking over as treasurer, Xenia will remain in an advisory position during the transition. Fr. David then presented her with a bouquet of flowers as a gift from a grateful parish. Additionally, Fr. David thanked Gerald Hook and I (Zachary Carnes) for our service on the parish council.

~ Xenia Durham presented the financial report. She said that we have had a successful year. While we fell short on our pledges in 2022, she said that new members and catechumens have done a fantastic job with tithing. We ended up collecting about \$15,000 more in revenue than we had anticipated. This is a testament to the health of our parish. She proceeded to explain the constituent parts of the provided financial report in detail.

~ Fr. David added to Xenia's report by further explaining the importance of pledges and encouraged people in their pledges.

~ Anya Hoats spoke about our 2023 budget, and she explained step-by-step the reasoning behind different aspects of the budget, including changes in personnel and changes in the cost of parish operations.

~ Kenneth Adams asked why the amount of interest on our mortgage is increasing every quarter. Xenia explained that while we have a variable rate loan, she is not sure that we can change the structure of the loan as it exists. Fr. David explained that more exploration needs to be done to determine exactly what kind of loan our loan is. He said that we probably should have transferred from a construction loan to a permanent loan, and this would have changed our quarterly payments to monthly payments.

~ Summer Richards asked what is meant by “Parish Activities” on the budget summary. Anya Hoats explained that this category consisted of events that were held at the church, but the main bulk of this category referred to contributions to the missions.

~ Kendall Stoner asked about how members of the missions, such as those who attend St. Paisios, were factored into the 2023 budget. Anya explained that the budget only included members of St. John’s and does not include the operations of the missions.

~ Seraphim Crossman made a motion to accept the 2023 budget, and Susie Finney seconded that motion. The motion passed.

Fr. David asked for ideas to get people to stay and clean up after coffee hour. Amongst a multitude of suggestions, Emily Richards suggested that we have seasonal teams covering different aspects of the cleaning. Seraphim Crossman suggested that our existing teams be assigned team leaders to coordinate and encourage the teams. Deacon Theophan suggested that we have a coordinator to oversee these possible team leaders and the teams. Katelin Kombos seconded Deacon Theophan and suggested that we have a committee to oversee this. She offered to head a committee later this year.

~ Taylor Adams asked about a cap on the benevolence fund. Fr. David explained that the parish council agreed to a \$5,000 cap on that fund, and he explained why the parish council concluded to cap the benevolence fund.

~ Taylor Adams also asked about how we might make the schoolhouse more efficient, specifically how we might make movement through the schoolhouse more efficient. He also said that it is not necessarily the best place to wash one’s hands before or after eating. Fr. David explained that there are a number of things that could be done to address the issues in the schoolhouse, and perhaps we could dip into our unrestricted funds to redo the building.

~ Finally, Fr. David adjourned the meeting, and we concluded by a voice vote. We stood and we sang the troparion of St. John of Damascus to end our meeting.

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Zachary Carnes, Secretary